Childhood's Unheard Obituary

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Childhood's Unheard Obituary

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Summary

Max tries to be a good kid, and ever since he learned that David cares about him more than he thought, he's pushed himself towards becoming someone better than he though he'd ever be. By the end of the summer David hopes Max has improved his life almost entirely for the better. He believes in him.

Until one day, Max is nowhere to be found. It is up to David and possibly Gwen to find him and bring him back to camp safely.

But just how far are David and Gwen willing to go just to bring Max back to a place he calls home?

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

July 9th, 2018.

It all started with a humid morning. More specifically, it was muggy and almost unbearable. “I know you don’t want to go outside,” David had spoken, “but we have to get the campers ready for the morning’s glorious activities.” He gathered the belongings he needed for the day. With his clipboard at his side and the bright yellow t-shirt he wore as a camper around his neck, he made his way to the front of the Mess Hall.

Gwen tagged along behind him. Not because she wanted to, but because she didn’t want David to start an argument with the campers or worse. She wanted a calm and quiet atmosphere before the day’s later storm.

The campers had surprisingly woken up on their own. They slowly made their way towards the Mess Hall to receive their breakfast, and David and Gwen watched as each of them sat down and began conversations with peers at their tables.

Gwen turned her head towards Nikki and Neil who were sitting at a table on the far side of the room. They were probably waiting for Max. Thinking nothing of it, she went to sit with Space Kid since he was sitting by himself for the third morning in a row.

“Where’s Max?” Neil asked Nikki who was eating her questionable oatmeal fast-paced. Nikki looked towards Neil who had a look of worry on his face. “I haven’t seen him since yesterday,” Nikki responded, “he probably slept in.”

Neil found it strange. Even though it was a Monday, and even if it was a Saturday, Max would have *never* slept in. Checking in on him was probably the best option to go through with. “Maybe I should go check on him.” Neil got up and awkwardly walked over and opened one of the front doors to the Mess Hall, and in that moment an eerie feeling began to climb onto Neil. Something was off, and they bad thing about it was that he couldn’t quite figure out what it was. Maybe when he saw Max the superstitions would cease.

Neil arrived at the tent. Instead of the alarming notion clocking out for they day, it only grew stronger. Before opening the tent to the morning sun, Neil softly called out to Max. “Max, are you alright?” He opened the tent, but was surprised by what he found.

Max wasn’t there.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Here's Chapter 2!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

KTRV CHANNEL 12 NEWSROOM, Medford, Oregon

“Good afternoon everyone I’m Abigail Olson here with my co-host Caleb Hernandez and we have breaking news coming in from the town of Sleepy Peak.”

The camera rotates towards Caleb and zooms in closer to his face.

“It has been three days since Max Buckley vanished from Camp Campbell, a summer camp he had been attending since the beginning of June, and there have been no clues discovered that could be linked to his disappearance. All of his belongings have been left behind including a hoodie he would wear daily. He is ten years old, 4’7, 115 lbs and was last seen wearing a mustard yellow shirt, denim jeans, and red and white striped shoes. Max is also described having curly black hair, ocean green eyes, a triangular shaped nose, and dark reddish eyebrows.”

The camera turns back to face Abigail, and a picture of Max appears on the screen.

“If you know **anything** about his disappearance then you are advised to call 911 and the national number for Missing & Exploited Children found below and on the front page of our website along with the rest of our stories we cover daily, I’m Abigail Olsen, Channel 12 News.”

Gwen sighed as she turned the tv off with the remote she had been holding for the entirety of the news report.

Neil turned his attention from the tv to Gwen. He didn't want to wound Gwen with his words, but he wanted to inform her of a possible scenario that could have lead to Max's absence. "He could've drowned," he hesitated, "you and I both know he can't swim."

Nikki was meddling with a loose floorboard when she overheard Neil mention his plausible outline for Max's exodus. "Why would he go in the water?" Nikki responded, "If he wanted to teach himself how to swim wouldn't he wait until it was bright outside?"

"You're right," Neil responded, "and I don't think they've found anything in the lake." He looked back at the blank screen of the tv and began to think of other causes for Max not being in their tent that morning when he went to check on him.

Cameron Campbell, facing the window and looking at the investigators and policemen surrounding the area, adjusted the collar on his shirt and crossed his arms. "Where's David?"

Gwen made her way over to him and looked out the window. "Him and Quartermaster went to help look for clues while I agreed to stay behind and watch the kids."

"I hope they find him," Cameron responded, "he's the glue that holds David together."

A wave of silence filled the room. It remained that way for a while until Quartermaster busted open the mess hall doors. Him and David entered the room, and he began to tell everyone some of the information they discovered.

"Well," Quartermaster began, "we found no trace of Max or any evidence around the camp. We took the dogs to the Woodscouts and the Flowerscouts, but we found nothing. The Woodscouts were in Portland on a tour and the Flowerscouts were at a convention in Medford. The investigators said they'll continue helping us look for him."

A smile arose on David's face. "The police are going to launch some interviews and hopefully open the door to new possibilities!" The hope could still be seen in his soul. He

knew Max was still out there, and nothing would stop him to bring Max home. Max was coming back soon, and then things would go back to normal.

He was sure of it.

Chapter End Notes

What happened to Max?

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Here comes Chapter 3!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sleepy Peak Police Department, Sleepy Peak, Oregon

The air that permeated the room felt stuffy. Everyone, including Nikki, was sweating with anticipation. The day had come where they would discuss reasons for Max not being at camp for almost a week. David, Nikki, Gwen, and Cameron Campbell were sitting at a table that was positioned in front of a large whiteboard. They were waiting for Neil's interrogation to finish up so that they could begin the process of going through evidence and crossing off the improbable causes for the investigation to proceed.

"I had to file **another** missing camper report," Gwen spoke, "I thought I wouldn't have to do one of those again."

David smiled and rested his hand on her shoulder. "Oh come on Gwen he can't be that far from camp! He most likely went into town and is probably heading back right now!"

"After five fucking days?" Gwen knew what David was trying to accomplish. He was attempting to make the case more lighthearted than it was verily. David tried to block away the pain of Max's desertion from saddening him even more. She could tell that at any juncture David would shatter if something goes wrong, or worse, they find Max's remains.

"What if he was at Spooky Island?" Cameron suggested.

“He wouldn’t go there alone,” Nikki responded, “he told me once that he would only go there if me and Neil were around.”

Cameron rolled his eyes, he knew they checked all over the island, and if anything, telling them he probably fell off the cliff like Jasper did that one time could lead them somewhere.

The room became completely reticent. Well, it was that way for a while until a knock could be heard at the door. The sound of a doorknob rotating was followed by Sheriff Sal and Neil entering the room. After not seeing Neil for two hours it made Nikki glad to see him again. Neil took a seat next to Nikki and Sal made his way towards the whiteboard. “Detective Frances Williamson won’t be accompanying us today due to personal reasons regarding her family.”

“Well, with that, do you have any ideas so far?” Gwen asked as she turned her body towards whiteboard.

“A few actually,” Sheriff Sal Hilton replied, “and that’s what we plan to go over in today’s session.”

Gwen and David both had their pen and paper ready while Cameron and the kids only listened to the possible causes of the missing child and friend.

“The first cause we can rule out is him joining a cult because the only cult around here is the one dealing with ‘Xemüg’ and at the time of Max’s disappearance the leader, Daniel Lancaster, had been in our county jail for two weeks with excessive observation over him.”

David crossed off Daniel from his list. If Daniel had taken Max he would have done something stupid to cause somebody to find the body sooner. As stated by Gwen once “his apple didn't fall far from his dumb cult parent's tree”.

“One reason could be that Max became a runaway and is now residing at a different location.” Sal stated as he wrote ‘runaway’ on the board.

“No,” David responded as he saw the Sheriff put the word ‘runaway’ on the board. “Sure, in the beginning he would try to get away from the camp, but shortly after that he stopped trying, and I doubt he would run away for good.”

A question mark was placed next to the word. “It may not be the cause but it’s still a possibility.”

They had been there for almost three hours and they had almost gone through everything. They only had a few left to go through.

“No drowning, not a runaway, didn’t join a cult, wasn’t avoiding war or the law,” David had spoken out loud, thinking nobody else could hear him. He didn’t know what else it could be. David wish he knew what happened to Max so that he could bring the boy he believed in so much back into security.

“Mr. Campbell,” Sheriff Sal began, “after all this do you have any idea of what happened to Max?”

Cameron moved his eyes away from David and over to Sal. “We’ve been through so much that I can’t even come to a conclusion myself.”

Sal took the statement to thought and began his own. “I agree, so here’s what we’ll do, we’ll keep looking into the case and inform you all if we discover any new evidence. You are all dismissed for today because we all need a break from this chaos.”

After saying their thank you's and goodbye's the five of them got into the car and drove back to camp. They had to find something. Max was somewhere, and it was up to them to find him. David was sure he wasn’t dead, and wherever Max was he knew he’d attempt follow his trail.

They got back to camp and saw Quartermaster standing in front of the Mess Hall. He was watching the kids until he noticed Gwen exiting the car. “Hey, I found something while you

all were gone."

They all followed Quartermaster into a enormous shed. David remembered that Cameron rarely used it. David had forgotten it existed at one point. It was giving everyone except Quartermaster an off feeling. Nothing looked out of the ordinary until QM pointed out a small stack of money hiding in a container under the table. "$1,000." Quartermaster said as he left the shed and made his way back to the forbidden place in which he stayed.

"Only $1,000?" David uttered as he slid out the box containing the money from under the small table. "Nobody rarely comes to the shed, so wouldn't there be more here?"

"Holy shit," Gwen responded, "Cameron, if you're involved with with Max's disappearance you better fucking start talking!" She was furious. Gwen began to believe that Cameron Campbell knew where Max was. She wanted to get a confession then and there but David stopped her before hands began being thrown.

"Now wait just a minute Gwen," David had stepped in between her and Campbell, "we can't confirm yet if Mr. Campbell was involved, but I'll write to the Sheriff and see if we can prove this claim is true!" David wanted to believe Gwen, but he also wanted the absolute truth that he thought would come from the findings of the Sheriff and other personnel involved.

David felt they were getting closer to getting Max back, because he knew that when they did, amends could be made and Max will get to continue his life as a camper with his friends.

Gwen thinks otherwise.

Chapter End Notes

Hm, where did Max go? Is he dead?

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 Incoming!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Next Day, Camp Campbell, Sleepy Peak, Oregon

It was almost 96 degrees, and everyone was mingling in the Mess Hall. The police station was an hour away, and after 15 minutes of waiting outside for Sheriff Sal, Gwen moved everybody inside so that nobody would pass out from exhaustion. She stood with her back against the wall, her focus was trying not to concentrate on the negative thoughts congregating in her mind. Gwen feared the worst outcome for Max, but didn't let the people around her know.

"I just kept the money there because I knew nobody would find it." Cameron told Neil after he had asked about it.

Neil turned his head to face Cameron and presented a confused look. "There was $1,000 found in there, but knowing the shed was rarely used, wouldn't you keep more in there? Did somebody give you the money, or worse, did you steal it?

David walked over to Neil to try and calm the situation. "Now Neil, we can't accuse someone of committing a crime if we don't know the whole picture! Once we know what for sure happened then we'll find and punish the true suspect of this problem!" David was worried. What if Max was hurt? What if he truly ran away? What if he really did join the cult? What if he was never coming back? He was knocked back into reality when Sheriff Sal came through the door.

"I'm so glad you called Gwen," Sheriff Sal began, "before we start pointing fingers I would like to start with something simple." The attention of everyone in the room was now focused

on Sal. “I would like to take Cameron Campbell in for questioning.”

“Me?” Cameron Campbell responded, “but I have nothing to do with this! Of all people you should investigate, it should be David!”

Sal studied the emotions and body language Cameron was presenting. It was off, but he decided not to say anything about it until the interrogation began.

After a brief conversation between Gwen and Sal he led Cameron to his car. The heat was said to be tremendous, but it wasn’t as bad as it was earlier that morning.

Gwen walked with Sheriff Sal as he got closer with Cameron to his police car. Sal opened the backseat door and Campbell sat down. He closed the door and made his way to the drivers side seat. Thank goodness Sal had all the windows down that day. Too bad the car didn’t have air conditioning.

“It won’t be so bad Mr. Campbell, and whatever you say could lead us closer to giving Max a safe return.”

Cameron Campbell rolled his eyes. “Okay, yeah sure Gretchen. We’ll see about that.”

And with that the car left the camp and made its way back to the police station. Unknowing to one of them what was about to come.

Eight Hours.

Eight Fucking Hours.

The room felt like there was a hundred people in it, but Cameron was the only one there. Sal told him he'd be back shortly because he had to get something to drink. Cameron hadn't told him anything related to the case, but by the observations he could only concur that by now Mr. Campbell could break at any moment.

Cameron heard the knob of the metal door rotate, and he watched as Sal entered the room with a small plastic cup of water in his hand. "Now, Mr. Campbell," Sal began, "we can handle this the easy way, or we can handle it the hard way."

Sheriff Sal almost had him, but he knew he had to try harder to get anything out. "You can either a, tell us what you know about Max's disappearance, or b, I can have you sent back to Super Guantanamo and have the big boys take a go at you."

Cameron's eyes widened. The one place he didn't want to go back to was there. He didn't even want to ponder the possibilities of what could happen if he did end up being sent back.

"I had nothing to do with his disappearance! I swear!"

"Are you sure? You've seemed pretty suspicious since the beginning of this investigation."

"I'm telling the truth!"

"What about the money? If nobody remembered where the shed was then how did Quartermaster know where the compartment holding the $1,000 was hidden?

"I don't know! That man has always been off-putting since I hired him. Maybe he's supernatural or something."

Sheriff Sal leaned in closer. "Listen. There are people in this investigation who are deeply worried about Max, and all they want is for him to come back to camp unharmed. Now, it would help us out a lot if you told us everything you know so that we could move forward with the investigation."

“I told you all I know Sal.”

“Well then,” Sheriff Sal made a hand gesture to signal the Millers to enter the room, “I hope you send me a postcard from Guantanamo.”

Bullshit. Cameron saw the agents stand behind him. He thought he’d never see those bastards again. They stood him up and when they were halfway to the door the truth began to flow from his old man’s mouth which caused them to stop the three of them where they were.

“I GAVE HIM TO A MAN! HE SAID HE’D GIVE ME A THOUSAND IF I LET HIM TAKE THE KID! I HAVEN’T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE! LET ME GO!”

The Millers where stunned with what they just heard. It was painful. How could anyone let that happen to a child? They couldn’t even imagine Meredith in a situation like that. They didn’t even want to imagine her in a situation like that. They brought Cameron back to the chair and threw him down onto it.

Sheriff Sal crossed his arms. “Well Mr Campbell, it seems that we are now closer to finding out where Max truly is. Thank you, you Bastard.”

He was in deep waters now. The dumbass in him had caught up with him. He told himself that they might as well take him back to Guan. He knew everyone would hate him more than they already did. He knew he had taken away a friend, a camper, and most importantly, a son.

All hell was about to break loose.

Chapter End Notes

Oh boy. How will David react?

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Here comes chapter 5!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Camp Campbell, Sleepy Peak, Oregon

The room was pure anarchy. There was crying, fighting, and all in between. Sal had informed them that Max was a potential martyr of child trafficking. Everybody was going mad. Everyone except for David.

“He can’t be that far, I’m sure he’s around here somewhere.” David spoke out.

“David,” Gwen uttered, “nobody including Cameron knows where he is. Max could be out of the country by now.”

“No, he’s **not**!” Tears began to permeate David’s eyes. He brought his hands to his head and began pacing back and forth.

Neil broke in between them and voiced his opinion. “Open up your fucking eyes! People usually don’t come back from shit like this!”

Tears turned into sobbing. “He’s going to come back, I know it!”

“You don’t know anything, none of us do!” Neil shouted back.

“Neil!” Gwen exclaimed.

David raced out of the Mess Hall. “I’m so sorry!”

Gwen was shaken up. To conceal it from everyone she let out a sigh. “Alright kids, calm down, we’ll take care of this, just, go to your tents while me and Sheriff Sal settle a few things.”

With that, the campers exited the Mess Hall and made their way back to their tents.

“So,” Sal began, “where would you like me to begin?”

David sat alone at the pier. He wanted to mollify himself before he went back to acquire more knowledge from Sal and Gwen. His shoes were residing beside him and his feet were swaying softly with the small tide of the lake.

He patted his vest and felt a piece of paper residing inside the interior pocket. He opened the flap of the vest and pulled out a small piece of paper. David unfolded it and time froze around him. It was the drawing Max had made of the three of them. He could recognize Gwen, himself, and Max clearly. Tears traveled down his face and settled onto the paper, but thankfully they won’t remain there forever.

Suddenly, there was a rustle in the nearby bushes. David departed his attention from the drawing and began to focus on the creature getting ready to pounce at him from the shrubbery. He clenched his jaw to hide at whimper from the incoming terror’s range of hearing.

Muack jumped out of the hedge, and David relaxed and finally took a deep breath. Muack made her way over and relaxed next to him.

“Hey girl.”

“Muack.”

“How’s your life been?”

“*Muack*.”

“Not good. I wish Max would come back to us. We’re all worried about him you know.”

“**Muack**.”

“See! That’s what I’ve been trying to say! Once he comes back then we can move on from this horrific experience!”

“Muack.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’ll get this all taken of! You won’t have to worry about a thing little lady!”

Muack stood up and decided to curl up on David’s lap, and while she went through with her choice fell asleep. Little snores could be heard coming from the webbed-feet mammal.

The atmosphere was calmer. The humidity was balmy. The wind was faint. It was nice, but David knew it wouldn’t last forever. He would have to face reality once he went back to the Mess Hall. He carefully picked up Muack and made his way back to the Mess Hall.

He opened the doors and saw Gwen, Campbell, QM, and Sal sitting at a table conversing with each other. He made his way towards the table and sat beside Gwen. “So, where do we begin?” David asked while sitting a sleeping Muack on the table in front of him.

“Well,” Sal began, “Cameron met the man, Mr. Brighton, on a forum dealing with weapons. Mr. Brighton sent him a link and that led to an illegal website on the deep web.”

“Was nobody at the station watching Cameron’s internet activity?” Gwen asked Sal.

“We didn’t feel like was necessary to monitor him.”

“He’s a *fucking* criminal,” Gwen responded, “if anything he should’ve been monitored vigorously from the moment the Millers let him go and begin working for David.”

“I guess we didn’t think he could use the internet that well.”

“What the fuck? He knows how to use the damn internet, he goes on Scamazon all the time.”

“Damn once click purchasing.” Cameron spoke out.

David turned his focus towards Sheriff Sal. “Where do you think Max could be?”

“Well,” Sal started, “It’s been more than 24 hours, and depending on the intentions of Mr. Brighton, he could be out of state or even out of the country.”

David placed his hands on his forehead as tears rolled down his cheeks.

He felt he was the one to blame at the core for Max’s kidnapping, and if only he was more careful, he thought, but it felt like nothing could bring done to bring him back.

“I’m so sorry Max.”

Chapter End Notes

Will David ever come to terms with the truth, and even himself?

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Here comes Chapter 6!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

WPBN Palm Beach County News, Boca Raton, Florida

"Good morning everyone I'm Levi Mitchell here with my co-host Isabella Brantley and this morning we are bringing you an update to a growing issue that continues to harm humanity worldwide, and that issue is human trafficking."

The camera's focus is turned towards Isabella.

"Over twenty years ago in 2018 human trafficking was an issue that was not being brought into light as well as it is today. Children and adults were ejected from their everyday lives and placed into ones where previous dreams of the future that included happiness were turned into ones full of dread. There are still people just like you and me who are trapped in their cages of fear, and for some, it was the last thing they *ever* got to witness."

The camera was rotated back to Levi.

"Everyday we fight for the rights of these victims, and with your help we *can*-"

The television was shut off, and a somewhat lanky man sat up and realized that he was going to be late for work. "Oh Shit!" He got up and sprinted to the bathroom to take a shower. He scolded himself for not taking one the night before.

After drying off as fast as a ceiling fan can go, he put his clothes on one after the other and gathered his belongings her needed for the day. The apartment complex he lived in had three

stories, and since he was on the third floor he was practically running to his job which was across the street and a couple of buildings down.

He ran out of the building and down the street. The hot sun was putting more pressure on his body, but that didn't stop him from getting to work before he was considered late.

He increased his speed as he came upon the building of his job. Homemade Thrift. He opened one of the doors.

He made it just in time.

The partially sunburnt man was in the employee's room when his boss walked in and noticed him clocking in for the day.

"Ah, Jackson Barlow, if you would've ran any faster all of the freckles on your face would've fallen off."

"Sorry Jedrick it won't happen."

Jedrick grabbed a donut from the box sitting on the table next to Jackson. "It's alright, but make sure you get up at a decent time tomorrow."

"I'm taking tomorrow off remember."

"Oh yeah," Jedrick spoke, "you really needed a day off to relax. Since you work all the time and all." A small smile appeared on the older man's face.

Jackson smiled back. "I'm glad you gave me a day off even though business here seems to have been booming recently and all."

“I would’ve given you the day off nonetheless.” He patted Jackson on the back and made his way to the door. “Well I hope you have a great day Jack!”

“You too Mr. Ledburry!”

Jedrick left and Jackson turned back to face his belongings while continuing to rest the smile along his face. He wished tomorrow would come sooner. It would be Friday! He’d get to do something he’d never done before. He’d get to go to a club, and with his friends! He’ll get to talk to them and maybe even meet a few new people! Something that he rarely got to experience due to work. Although he didn’t mind too much. A night out in the town once every now and then doesn’t seem like a bad idea.

Maybe it would do him good, and it could possibly open a new door for him in the right direction.

The rest of the day was like any other. He organized items and disposed of ones that were too damaged to be sold any longer. A few people had asked him questions and he happily answered each one of them. Jackson enjoyed the thrift store. It was a calming atmosphere, and he sometimes called it his second home, but in recent days each one of them felt a little different. He felt like there was something missing. A part of him that felt like it was something he needed to be complete.

Jackson wanted to feel love.

Sure, he had his family. Some here in Florida and some in Georgia, but it was a different kind of love. A love that he never had before. It didn’t matter what they looked like or how old they were. As long as they were legal and their relationship was a healthy one, then it didn’t really matter to him. He wanted someone to hold him when he was sad, and vise versa. Jackson wanted to make someone happy with the memories they’d make together.

He didn’t realize until it hit him on just how lonely he was in his current living situation.

Jackson was sweeping the floor in front of the large plexiglass window. He looked up and turned his focus onto a group of friends getting back into their car and exiting the parking lot across from the store. He smiled and returned his focus back onto sweeping the floor. He was excited but nervous at the same time. What if something did go wrong? What if he made a fool of himself? Would it worth it even going in the end?

Jackson was struck out of his train of negative thoughts when his co-worker Catalina called him over to the register.

“Hey Angel Face! Heard you were going to a club tomorrow!”

Jackson rolled his eyes. “Don’t call me that.”

“I’m just joking with ya,” Catalina replied, “so, which club you going to?”

“Luxuriant Falls.”

“That’s a pretty wild place at times, are you sure you want to go there?”

“I’ll be **fine** Catty,” Jackson responded, “I’m going with a group of my friends so I’m sure it won’t get too wild if I’m there.”

Catalina began to make her way to the back to clock out. “Well have fun Jack!”

He smiled. “I will!”

Jackson watched as she disappeared into the back.

He eventually sat the broom back into its place and made his way to the employer's room to clock out for the night. When he arrived he turned to the back window in which the sunset brightly shone through.

A quirky smile that he hadn’t expressed in years appeared on his face.

The door he had waiting for him might open wide soon.

A door with somewhat positive possibilities.

Chapter End Notes

Will the door open for Jackson? Will he enjoy the club in the end?

End Notes

Stay tuned!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!